

## **Abraham Lincoln's Family**

Tiffany Otten  
Oregon High School, Oregon  
Teacher: Sara Werckle

Abraham Lincoln lived a great life. He was a wonderful husband to Mary, his wife, and a loving father to his four boys, Robert, Edward, William, and Thomas. Mary was a great mother to them all, trying to bring them up the best that she could. Robert achieved many important things in his life as he grew up to be a governor. Edward, not living past four years of age, barely got to begin his life but was loved very much in the short time he was alive. William, who died at age eleven, was quite the prankster and yet mature for his age. Thomas, following in William's footsteps with pranks, was also more interested in his father, who was never annoyed by his pranks and capers. But he too did not get to live a long life, dying at age eighteen. Though only one of their sons lived to see adulthood, the Lincolns were a loving, caring family.

Mary Ann Todd, later to marry Lincoln, was born on December 13, 1818. Mary received more education than most women at that time. With her wealth and family background her decisions about marriage were surprisingly unselfish. She said, "I would rather marry a poor man than to marry all the houses of gold." When she married Abraham, some of Mary's family did not agree with her choice. Before moving to the White House, where there were maids to help with the children, Mary did most of the work. She tended to the children's needs, mended their clothes, helped them with their schoolwork, and watched their behavior. Most importantly, she tried to instruct them on how to be gentlemen. Abe wrote to Mary once when he was away on business, "I

thought you hindered me some in attending to business, but now, having nothing it has grown exceedingly tasteless to me.”

Robert Todd Lincoln was the oldest child of Mary and Abraham. He was born August 1, 1843. He was named after Mary’s father. Robert was stocky and not lean and long-boned like his father. Robert was shy and reticent. He was not as outgoing as the rest of the family. Robert was very successful. He entered Harvard in 1860 and graduated in 1864. He became a well-known lawyer and businessman. He also played a great role in government, serving as Secretary of War and was later appointed Minister to Great Britain. Robert was the only son of the Lincolns to live a full life and reach adulthood. He died at age 82, at this summer home in Vermont, on July 26, 1926.

The second child Mary and Abraham had was Edward Baker Lincoln. Edward was born on March 10, 1846. He was named after a friend and political ally of Abraham’s. After suffering from a long illness, he died, only being three years and ten months old. Little is known about Edward since he died so young. Mary wrote of one occasion when Robert brought home a kitten “when Eddie spied, his tenderness broke forth, he was a delighted little creature over it. . .” As Abe said his goodbyes and was leaving Springfield for the White House, he thought of Eddie. “Here I have lived a quarter of a century and have passed from a young to an old man. Here my children have been born and one is buried.” This summed up what Springfield meant to him.

William “Willie” Wallace Lincoln was the third child born to Mary and Abraham Lincoln. He was born on December 21, 1850, in Springfield. William was named for his uncle, William Wallace. William was a cheerful and amiable child. He was mature for his age. William was popular with his playmates. His mother described Willie as “a very

beautiful boy, with a most spiritual expression of face.” But this does not mean that he was not ready to join his younger brother Tad in pranks and mischief whenever opportunities presented themselves. William did not live long. He died at age 11 in the White House on February 20, 1862. His death was very tragic and drew a dark shadow over the remaining years his father served as president.

The fourth child Mary and Abraham had was their last. His name was Thomas Lincoln. He was named after Abraham’s father. Thomas’s nickname was “Tadpole” because when he was an infant his head seemed larger than usual. The name was abbreviated to “Tad” and was his nickname for life. Thomas was almost constantly near his father and always clinging to his side. He overflowed with joy in his young life. Thomas was inventive in mischief. He was rather famous for his pranks that he would often carry out with the help of William, his older brother. Thomas died at age 18 on July 15, 1871, almost six years after the assassination of his father. It was a great loss to his mother who depended on him for love and understanding after Abraham’s death.

Abraham Lincoln was born on February 12, 1809. His parents were Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln. His mother died when he was nine. His father remarried to Sarah Bush Johnston Lincoln. At age 22 Lincoln left home to try and find his own way of life. He ran for state legislature and lost the first time but was successful the second time. Then he began to study law and moved to Springfield. While in Springfield he met Mary Todd who he later married in 1842. Over the course of ten years they had four children, all boys. In addition to his illustrious political career, Abraham was a loving father and husband. Mrs. Lincoln wrote of him, “Mr. Lincoln was the kindest man and most loving husband and father in the world.” [From Family Tree Maker: Verizon Online,

“Ancestors of Abraham Lincoln” (Oct. 11, 2006); Lincoln Home: Verizon Online, “The Lincoln Family” (Oct. 11, 2006); Paul M. Angle, “The Lincoln Reader;” and Editors of Country Beautiful Magazine, “Lincoln: His Words and His Worlds”.]